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# **DISCOURSE,**

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR,

*THE COUNCIL,*

AND THE TWO HOUSES COMPOSING THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts,**

MAY 31, 1809.

*Being the Day of General Election.*

.....  
BY **David Osgood, D. D.**

Pastor of the Church in Medford.  
.....

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FROM THE PRESS OF

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1809.

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**Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

*IN SENATE, JUNE 1, 1809.*

**ORDERED,** That the Hon. WILLIAM SPOONER, PETER C. BROOKS and JOHN WELLES, Esquires, be a Committee to wait on the Rev. DAVID OSGOOD, D. D., and in the name of the Senate, thank him for the Discourse delivered yesterday by him before His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable Council, and the two branches of the General Court ; and also to request of him a Copy for the Press.

*Attest.*

**NATHANIEL COFFIN,** *Clerk of Senate.*

MM

## DISCOURSE.

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JUDGES IX. 56, 57.

*Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren :*

*And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads ; and upon them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal.*

.....

IN these words the inspired writer gives us his reflections upon the preceding history of the family of Jerubbaal, originally called Gideon. Like those old Romans who were called from the plough to the dictatorship, Gideon was threshing wheat at the time when he received his commission to head the armies of Israel. Among all the celebrated heroes of antiquity, none could have been entitled to greater respect, than is expressed by the angel of God in this salutation to Gideon, **THE LORD IS WITH THEE, THOU MIGHTY MAN OF VALOUR.** Though he had not, as yet, advanced far in life, this greeting suggests the idea of an illustrious established character, that, by some prior achievements not recorded, his great talents and heroic qualities had already been signalized. Many opportunities for his becoming thus distinguished, must have occurred during the overwhelming calamities under which his country had groaned for the last seven years. Through each revolving season, what the Israelites had sown, their enemies had reaped ; and the pillaged inhabitants who had escaped with their lives, were left destitute of the means of subsistence. Dispersed among the mountains, in dens, caves and strong holds ; they were languishing through want, while the combined forces of their enemies, *numerous as grasshoppers*, were spreading their ravages far and wide and destroying the country.

Such was the situation of the Israelites when their God interposed by the hand of Gideon, to effect their deliverance. Never perhaps before or since, was so great and splendid a victory gained by such a handful of troops. With but three hundred men, through divine assistance, Gideon put to instant and total rout, an army of more than one hundred thousand. All these and twenty thousand more, fell in the course of his success. He ceased not the pursuit till he had captured and slain the combined kings and chiefs of the enemy.

Amidst all his efforts against foreign invaders, he had to contend with the unfriendly views, the baseness and treachery of a numerous party among his own people. A great nation is seldom, if ever, reduced to the condition in which the Israelites are heretated to have been, without its being occasioned in part, at least, by disunion and discord among themselves. When they are destined to subjugation and conquest, their intestine divisions prepare the way and facilitate the event. The intrigues of their conquerors are usually as efficacious as their weapons. Among the Israelites at this time, whole cities, if not tribes, had taken so decided a part against the cause of their country; and either through fear or corruption, were so attached to that of its invaders that, after Gideon's first great and miraculous victory, they would not admit the probability of his final success. Instead of the feelings of gratitude and the language of praise, they uttered that of contempt. To his demand of refreshment for his exhausted and fainting soldiers, the magistrates of Succoth and Penue! returned this most insolent answer, *Are Zeba and Zulmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?* In the punishment of these faithless cities afterward, patriotism, as well as justice, was displayed. The

common safety required an example of terror in such vile traitors.

On various other occasions, Gideon exhibited the abilities and virtues of a great and good commander. While he was yet in pursuit of the flying enemy, he found himself unexpectedly involved in controversy with a part of his own forces. The succours from the powerful and warlike tribe of Ephraim, took offence at their not having received an earlier summons to the war. Their anger was as unseasonable, as utterly unfounded ; yet for these very reasons, the more wild and intractable. Had Gideon answered them as Jephthah did afterward, the consequences might have been equally lamentable. We cannot but admire his self-command, his superior wisdom and goodness in turning away their wrath. By passing unnoticed the absurdity of their allegations, and by his modesty and humility in extolling *their* exploits as superior to his own ; he disarmed their insolence and so flattered their vanity, as prevented any detriment to the public service by so foolish an altercation.—In short, by his valour and good conduct, greatness of mind, soundness of judgment, moderation, prudence, and disinterestedness in serving the public ; he completely succeeded in breaking from the neck of his country, the yoke imposed by foreign powers, vanquishing and expelling those invaders, chastising their partizans among his own people, quelling sedition, reconciling parties and divisions, and, at length, establishing the independence, peace and prosperity of his nation.

So manifold, great and extensive were his services that, the Israelites, feeling the happiness derived from his administration, were constrained to the most grateful acknowledgments. Nay, their gratitude led them to offer much more than he was willing to accept.—Always prone to imitate the customs and manners of



the nations around them, they already entertained the desire of resembling them in the form of their government. Having received such proofs of Gideon's abilities and of the excellence of his character ; a great majority of them agreed to make him king, and to render the crown hereditary in his family : *Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also.* Gideon seems to have been sensibly hurt and grieved that his fellow-citizens were capable of making such a proposal. Most memorable is his answer ; and for patriotism, piety, and disinterestedness, almost unexampled : *I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : the Lord shall rule over you.* Thus firmly and sternly did he oppose the wishes of an infatuated people to make a surrender of their liberties by turning their divinely constituted republic into a monarchy. Thus nobly did he reject a sceptre when offered, showing a mind superior to the charms of power, the splendors of royalty, and all the allurements of worldly grandeur—at the same time solemnly admonishing the Israelites that, as God was their king, no one, unauthorised by him, could lawfully exercise the supreme dominion over them. Gideon was a *true republican*. Would to God that the principal leaders of those who affect to be so called in modern times, were not, in their principles and conduct, their views and pursuits, perfect contrasts to this *Israelite indeed !*

Though he refused the title and prerogatives of king, yet Gideon's great services and the weight and respectability of his character, gave him an influence in the affairs of the nation, superior to that usually attendant on royal authority. Such was the constitution of the Jewish commonwealth, that idolatry partook of the nature of treason and rebellion. If it were not immediately punished and extirpated by the executive authority, it uniformly brought divine judg-



ments upon the nation. Yet it seems that through their whole history down to the Chaldean captivity, this sin continued to be precisely that which most easily beset them. Prone however as they were to this sin, in such awe did they stand of Gideon, that, during his life (which was mercifully prolonged to *a good old age*) it was not openly practised. For this reason the historian adds, *The country was in quietness forty years, in all the days of Gideon.* What an uncommon and almost singular instance of national peace and prosperity ~~and~~ all apparently derived from the authority, influence and example of an individual ! What a blessing to mankind are such individuals ! How truly are they the salt of the earth and the light of the world !

The characters of great and good men are essentially the same in every nation and through every age. Under the name of Gideon, we have marked much of the conduct and many of the virtues of that illustrious Chief to whom our own country was indebted for its deliverance, peace and prosperity. The government of such rulers is compared in Scripture, to *the rain coming down upon the mown grass, showers on the thirsty earth—to the light of the morning when the sun is rising, to a morning without clouds* ; while on the other part, rulers of an opposite character, devoid of the principles of true religion and virtue, are depicted, in the consequences of their administration to the people, as *roaring lions and ranging bears.* The truth and justness of these representations are confirmed by the experience of all nations and by the whole history of the world. Is it then conceivable, that the nation of Gideon or the nation of Washington, after having for years rejoiced in the rich blessings derived from such rulers, after having had perfect acquaintance with the principles and maxims of their administration, after having received from them

their last solemn paternal advice, should, in direct contradiction to such advice, be capable of giving their suffrages for rulers known to be of a different and opposite character? Of all the follies to which human beings are liable, is there any more unaccountable, more astonishing than this?

*The Lord shall rule over you*, said Gideon to the assembled Israelites; and this he continued repeating, inculcating and, with the utmost exertion of his power and influence, energetically enforcing throughout his lengthened days to the last hour of his life. But, says the historian, *as soon as Gideon was dead, the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god.* This choice of new gods could not so immediately have taken place had not the people been previously thus inclined. The probability is, that, like a mighty stream obstructed in its course, their idolatrous inclinations had been long swelling and tumultuously rising against the authority of Gideon. On the ceasing of this authority therefore, they rushed precipitately the downward way of their hearts—From the subsequent history however, we are led to conclude that the commencement of this apostacy was, not at Ophrah where Gideon had dwelt and was buried; but, in a distant territory at Shechem a city of the first rank in the numerous tribe of Ephraim. The inhabitants of this place had been long waiting with impatience for the tidings of old Gideon's exit, that they might, without fear, openly avow their attachment to Baal. No sooner therefore were those tidings announced, than all hands were employed in erecting a temple to their favorite idol, preparing sacrifices and establishing the ritual of his worship.

With the zeal of new proselytes, and with the malignity which apostates from the true religion always feel towards those whom they have deserted;

the Shechemites were thus employed when there appeared among them, a base born son of the late Gideon, named *Abimelech*, signifying in the original Hebrew, *my father a king*. The vanity of his mother, in all probability, gave him this name, that it might denote her connexion with the most eminent personage in Israel. Nor is it unlikely, that its early impression upon the mind of her son, continually cherished by maternal pride in his education, kindled in his bosom that ambition which, on the death of his father, led him to aspire at royalty. The difficulties to be encountered, the obstacles to be removed or surmounted, were undoubtedly such as would have discouraged any other spirit less daring and wicked. *Samuel made his sons judges* in the land : In this, he most probably followed the example of his predecessors, who, very naturally, introduced their sons as subordinate officers and assistants in the administration of the government. Gideon left seventy legitimate sons. Forty years had elapsed since Jether the eldest, attended his father in the war against the Midianites. By this time, the most, if not all, of them had arrived to that age which usually gives men the greatest sway in the affairs of the public ; and were probably in stations of power and trust at the death of their father. If they were in general attached to his religion and government, as, it is certain, one of them was, they must, with their friends and connexions, have formed a most formidable phalanx against the ambitious designs of Abimelech. The disadvantages of *his birth, as the son of a maid-servant*, rendered his claim more questionable than that of any of his brethren. In short, he was well aware, that he had no prospect of success but through *their* previous destruction ; and he seems to have possessed too much of the modern philosophy, to feel any check or restraint from that consideration.

We may fairly suppose that, upon his first coming among the Shechemites, he openly applauded their innovations in religion, declared his own faith to be the

same with their's, expressed his abhorrence of the former worship, and inveighed equally against the late government and against all who had been concerned in its administration. His object was, by his management and address, so to work up and inflame the passions and prejudices of the multitude, that they might the more easily afterward be brought to favor that scheme of ambition which as yet, he forbore openly to avow. When, by these arts, he had attracted notice, become popular, and found himself high in the esteem of the citizens; he began his secret intrigues with a chosen few. His mother was a native of this city, and through her numerous relations, had a great interest with the citizens. These relations were now made the confidants of Abimelech. To them he opened his plot, and solicited their assistance in carrying it into effect. *He communed, says the historian, with the brethren of his mother, and with all the family of the house of her father.* Having brought these to espouse his cause, he prescribed to them the means for gaining over the other citizens. They were instructed to display all their eloquence in painting to the people, the pride and arrogance of his brethren, their arbitrary and tyrannical dispositions, their ambitious views, and the scenes of civil discord, unavoidably consequent upon the rivalries of so many young princes—all aspiring to the sovereignty. The history being totally silent with respect to any ambitious designs entertained by the other sons of Gideon; these insinuations of Abimelech, were the grossest forgeries, vile and wicked slanders, contrived and promulgated for no other purpose but to cloak the deeds of horror which he already meditated. After possessing the minds of the people with those prejudices against his brethren; Abimelech's partisans were next to sound his praises, and finish their harangue with reminding the people that, as originating from their city and related to many of them, he was *their bone and their flesh.*

The brethren of his mother and their kindred seem most faithfully to have fulfilled their instructions : *They spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words* ; and by their eloquence and influence, succeeded in winning the hearts of the citizens, and attaching them to his interest. *He is our brother*, one and another exclaimed ; and so, his party daily increased. When it had become strong, the first thing requested of them was, that the money in the public treasury, might be at his disposal. To this the elders of the city consented, and were probably not ignorant of the cruel and bloody, though as yet, secret enterprise for which it was wanted. As they were the worshippers of that idol whose altar Gideon had thrown down, their religious principles, as well as political views, might render them willing that a severe revenge should be executed upon his family. With their money, Abimelech hired a troop of banditti ; the history says, *vain and light persons*, to surprise and massacre his brethren. As a stone was often used as an altar, the history, in stating that *they slew the three score and ten sons of Jerubbaal upon one stone*, may be understood as insinuating that all these persons were offered as so many victims to Baal, by way of atonement for the injury which that idol had formerly received from their father.

With this sacrifice, shocking and horrible as it was, the Shechemites seem to have been well pleased ; believing, no doubt, that it would render their idol the more propitious to them. Soon after, they assembled in a formal manner to place the crown upon the head of Abimelech, and take their oath of allegiance. Thus they publicly appropriated his crimes, bound the guilt of them upon their own consciences, and rendered themselves liable to share in their punishment. Instances of such extraordinary wickedness and cruelty rarely escape punishment even in the present world. In the common retributions of divine providence, they who take the sword, often perish by the sword : Men

of violence and blood usually come to a violent end. What they have sown, they also reap. They are snared in the work of their own hands, and fall in the pit which themselves have digged.

But, as the Israelites were the chosen people of Jehovah, he usually gave them previous warning of those judgments which their crimes drew down upon them. To Abimelech and the Shechemites, this warning was dispensed by Jotham the only one, of all Gideon's legitimate sons, who escaped the massacre. Him the spirit of God undoubtedly prompted and inspired to foretel the just doom which awaited the murderers of his brethren. His own ingenuity, perhaps, framed the allegory with which his prediction is introduced. Nothing pertaining to language, seems to have been more ancient, than the use of parables and apologues to set forth the most serious matters, and inculcate the most interesting truths. The Greeks claimed to have been the inventors of this mode of instruction; but their claim had no other foundation besides their own vanity. Ages before the existence of Æsop or any other author known to their nation, the Orientals, and particularly the Hebrews, had adopted this ingenious method of teaching by amusing. "As speech became more cultivated, says the learned *Warburton*, the rude manner of speaking by action, was smoothed and polished into an apologue or fable; where the speaker, to enforce his purpose by a suitable impression, told a familiar tale of his own invention, accompanied with such circumstances as made his design evident and persuasive."

The city of Shechem being situated at the foot of mount Gerizzim, from this mount, in the hearing of all the people assembled at a public festival subsequent to the coronation of Abimelech, Jotham pronounced his *curse*, not a *causeless* one, it being a divine prediction. "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they

said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

As this fable is confessedly the most ancient upon record; so it is beautiful, impressive, and striking beyond almost any other example. By the speeches which Jotham makes for the good and useful trees, he seems, with filial reverence, to allude to the noble conduct of his father in refusing to be made king; while at the same time he reminds the Israelites of their unspeakable obligations to him.\*

The general moral of the parable, is highly important, and is inculcated with all imaginable force. Following the arrangement of scripture, which uniformly includes all men under the two opposite characters of the righteous and the wicked, it sets forth the different effects produced by these characters when exalted

\* The expression of wine's *cheer*ing God and man, ought perhaps to be rendered *gods and men*. Jotham here adopts the pagan style as best adapted to the notions of the idolatrous Shechemites, and more likely to be understood by them. Instead of referring to Jehovah, he means that wine cheereth hero-gods, such as the Shechemites worshipped. They had made Baal-berith their god, a deity confessedly originating from among men. As having this allusion, the expression contains a fine stroke of ridicule and insinuates to the Shechemites, the pitiful origin of their deities—they being such as were supposed to be, or to have been, *refreshed with wine*.



to power ; the healing, cheering and beneficent influences of the one ; and the wounding, fretting and baneful influences of the other. The different ways by which they frequently attain to power, are also strongly marked. No arts however vile, no intrigues however base and wicked, are scrupled or declined by unprincipled men when circumstances are such as to give them any hope of success. For the honors and emoluments of office, their thirst is insatiable, and they hurry on to their attainment per fas & nefas. Though in themselves, weak and worthless, and, from their want abilities or from their want of integrity, totally incompetent to the duties of a high station ; yet, these are the men whose souls are devoured by ambition, in whom it reigns predominant. They are always aspiring to the chief dignities, always on the watch to burst the doors of public confidence and thrust themselves forward to the chair of State ; while, on the other part, the truly wise and good are too modest and diffident thus to obtrude themselves upon the notice of the public. Instead of placing their happiness in the exercise of dominion over others, they are content with the due government of themselves, and prize the ease and freedom of private life. It is with no small reluctance, that such men are drawn from their beloved retirement. *The olive tree, the fig tree, the vine,* and every good and useful tree, are afraid to turn aside from that course of beneficence allotted them by nature and the author of nature. Aware of the responsibility annexed to a high station, they dread its snares and temptations. Doubting of their own capacity to serve the Publick in the best manner, they dread lest by some mistake in their administration, the peace, safety or prosperity of the State should be endangered. They therefore wish to decline a province to which they fear their talents are not equal. Nothing but a conviction of duty, of a call in providence will enable them to surmount these scruples. On the other part, unprincipled men have no difficulties of this kind. The

bramble, whose very nature unfits it to be useful in any place or condition, boldly comes forward, self-assured and self-confident, to be made the head of the whole vegetative creation.

The vanity of base men when thus invested with power, is painted in colours the most vivid and striking; and the ridicule thrown upon that vanity, is inimitably marked and pointed in those circumstances where the bramble bids his new subjects, who needed no shadow, to *come*, and *put their trust in his*—"If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in *my* shadow"—in the shadow of a bramble!

Such a claim is never made by rulers truly wise and good. From a deep and habitual sense of their liableness to err, they dare not demand implicit confidence. "Though I am unconscious of intentional error, says one of the best of rulers, I may have committed many. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert the evils to which they tend." The election of such a ruler seems to have been, at first, proposed by the republic of trees. To such a choice, the revealed wisdom of God confines the republic of men. *Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.* The whole nation is to be scrutinized that its best characters may be selected. **ABLE MEN**, possessing extensive knowledge, clear and rational ideas of a just and equal government—ideas matured by deep reflection, nice observation, and long experience. **SUCH AS FEAR GOD**, who are under the habitual impression of their accountableness to him for all their actions, possessing established principles of true religion—principles continually cherished and strengthened by a regular and conscientious attendance upon religious duties. **MEN OF TRUTH**, in whose conduct and transactions either in their private or public capacity, no appearance of guile, of duplicity, of insincerity or of subtle craftiness, can be found; all whose

measures both of internal policy and of foreign negotiation, are above the suspicion of artifice and design, bearing the evident marks of fairness, simplicity, truth, justice, and strict impartiality ;—men whom no considerations will induce knowingly to swerve from these principles of true dignity and rectitude. **HATING COVETOUSNESS**, whose very souls abhor all mean and selfish views, all interested schemes for their own advancement or for the advancement of any party ; who recognize no party, but behold with equal affection and solicitude, all parts of the community ; and make the general weal the great object of all their counsels, endeavours, and pursuits ; whose whole administration reflects greatness of mind, liberality of sentiment, generous and noble aims, disinterestedness, and public spirit.

Would such rulers, on their first elevation to power, with an air of serious concern, anxiously ask, “how are vacancies to be obtained ?” After a long and tedious struggle, having, at length, “burst the doors of honor and confidence,” and forced our entrance all hungry and starving for lucrative employments, “how are vacancies to be obtained ?”

Would rulers who are men of *ability*, that is, of some understanding, on the reception of injuries and insults from foreign nations, avenge such wrongs by a most rigorous blockade of all the ports of their own country ?—Would rulers who are *men of truth*, speaking of this identical measure, declare to their own subjects, that its sole object was to distress foreign nations ; and at the same time, in the most formal and solemn manner, protest to those foreign nations, that it was wholly a municipal regulation, not in the least aimed against them ?—Would rulers partaking of the nature of the *olive* and other good trees, on their exaltation, bear their faculties with the airs of victors at the head of a triumphant party, and exercise their power for the humiliation of all who had not favored their promotion ? Would they heap reproaches upon their

predecessors in the administration, stigmatize them as a *sect*, charge them with "having proscribed half the society as unworthy of any trust"—and with having conferred offices upon others guilty of political "delinquency, oppression, intolerance, and anti-revolutionary adherence to our enemies?"—Then exhibit themselves as brought forward to correct such abuses, declare their purpose to effect it, and warn the nation that till it shall be accomplished, it must not be expected that "the honesty, capacity and faithfulness" of candidates will be the qualities principally regarded in appointments to office.

In free governments, during the excitements and tumultuous scenes of popular election while the partisans of rival candidates are discussing the merits and exerting their influence in behalf of their respective favorites; unpleasant things are unavoidable. But no truth in the Bible is more certain than this, that great and good minds, upright and enlightened statesmen, possessed of a true patriotism, will retain no remembrance of these irritations afterward. Placed at the helm, from that moment they will cease to know, and from every wish to know, who voted for or against them. It will be their most studious concern throughout their administration, to show themselves alike blind to, and ignorant of, all parties; bearing an equal relation to, and an equal affection for, each individual and each class and description of the people; entertaining no other thought or design but by an equal, universal, most strenuous and impartial beneficence, to dissolve and melt down into one common mass, all party distinctions. They will consider themselves as sustaining the representative sovereignty of the country for the good of the whole and of every part; and in the execution of their high office, will regard nothing but the general weal, peace, and prosperity.

Such rulers can have no occasion for a veil of mystery over their proceedings. The general good being the object of all their counsels, they are willing that their plans for its promotion, should be examined by

the people for whose sake they are proposed and whose interests will be affected by them. Nor are they hasty in their decisions. No question of great moment, is determined till it has been first weighed and thoroughly considered in all its bearings and relations. It was an acknowledged trait in the character of that ruler whom our country recognizes as its father, that his eyes and ears were always open to information from every quarter. He chose that a difficult question, previous to its receiving his decision, should be exposed to public discussion, that he might avail himself of any light that might be thrown upon it by the collision of parties. He wished the necessity or usefulness of every act of his administration, should be so manifest as to meet the approbation of all reasonable unprejudiced minds.

Alas ! when we think of *him*, do we not feel a gloom at the reverse witnessed in our public affairs since they have fallen into other hands, into the hands of those, I mean, who uniformly opposed his most wise and salutary measures ? What a different temper and conduct have marked their course ? and, to what a result have they progressed ? The very things against which He, with such anxious solicitude and boding apprehension, most solemnly, again and again cautioned us, have taken place. "Excessive partiality to one foreign nation, and excessive dislike of another ;" timid and mean submissions to the outrages of the one, and hostile menacing airs towards the other, continued through a long course of equivocal negotiation, at length, brought us to the brink of a precipice. To effect our escape, gracious heaven ! what was done ? Measures strange, *new under the sun*, not recorded in any history, not tested by the experience of any nation, were precipitately proposed and as precipitately adopted. "I would not deliberate" exclaims the infatuated senator : and so laws are at once enacted whose execution brings distress upon thousands, arrests a commerce said to be the second in the world, and turns the naval and military force of the country

against the industry and peace of its inhabitants ; laws which, in a free republic, outrage all the principles of freedom, trample upon the most essential rights of man, and dissolve the bonds of the social compact.—The obstinacy with which the blundering\* authors of these measures adhered to them, was truly astonishing. To the cloud of petitions, remonstrances and resolves, from whole states, as well as from towns, counties and other collections of people, all pointing out the absurdity, unconstitutionality, oppressive and ruinous tendency of those laws—the only answer was, this language of the bramble, *come and put your trust in my shadow*. In case of disobedience, menaces followed. If every mouth were not stopped, if every tongue were not silent from censure or opposition, the most tremendous punishment was denounced : *Let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon*.

It seems essential to public liberty, that the choice of rulers should be in the hands of the people. Among the nations who have understood the nature, and been capable of estimating the value of liberty, what rivers of blood have been shed, and what countless millions of treasure have been expended to obtain or to preserve this privilege ! Yet what people, in the full enjoyment of it, have not, sooner or later, abused

\* *Blundering*—This epithet needs no apology, since, by the late accommodation with Great-Britain, on the very terms offered from the beginning, our government has implicitly acknowledged that the embargo measures were unnecessary ; of course, foolish and *blundering*. Must not the advisers and abettors of those measures, the source of so many evils, have faces of brass if they ever show them again in our national councils ? My prayer to God for them is, that they may be restored to the use of their reason, freed from those prejudices and partialities which have hitherto permitted them to see only through the eyes of a *Jefferson*. Had it been the study of these men to give the most perfect illustration of a government administered by a bramble, could they have hit upon an expedient more to their purpose than their embargo system ? Of all shrubs, the bramble affords the thinnest and most wretched shade, of which all who attempt to avail themselves, if they turn their body, or move their head, their hand, or foot, instantly they are wounded and pierced with thorns. Were not all these particulars realised in the vexatious restrictions, exorbitant exactions, and numberless fines and forfeitures of the vile laws in question ?

it to their own destruction, by giving their suffrages in favor of a bramble? Melancholy instances of this phrenzy among republican states, occur in all history, sacred and profane, ancient and modern. If parasites and flatterers besiege the throne of princes, hollow hearted patriots, and noisy aspiring demagogues are not less assiduous, or less intriguing, in paying their court to the sovereign people. By such agents and such means, the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, once so flourishing, great and renowned, were cheated out of their liberties, and ultimately degraded to the bottom of the scale among the nations of Europe. The nature of all republican governments is such, that they almost necessarily engender parties and factions, divisions and contests. In these contests with each other, men professing themselves republicans, lose sight of their principles in their blind, yet violent attachment to their respective parties. Enlisted under the banners of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, both sides fight most furiously for their republic, that is, for its shadow, its empty name after all its essential powers and privileges have been surrendered into the hands of their respective leaders, now sovereigns and despots. Are not we ourselves far advanced toward a situation like this, when the leaders of a dominant party commence an invasion on our *bill of rights*, and boldly usurp powers not granted by the constitution? In such case, the only hope or consolation left us, consists in this, that no free people will submit to such usurpations, and thus suffer their liberties to be wrested from them till, by vice and corruption, they have become prepared for slavery. Had the Shechemites been *Israelites indeed*, firm in the religion of their ancestors and under the influence of virtuous principles; all the arts of such a character as Abimelech, would have failed of success. But having apostatized from Jehovah, and become thoroughly depraved both in their principles and morals—being thus ripe for ruin, divine justice permitted them, with their own hands, to pull that ruin upon themselves. They



were given over to the infatuation of putting their trust in the *shadow of a bramble*.

The sacred historian mentions it as not the least among the sins of the Israelites, that *they shewed no kindness to the house of Gideon according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel*. Nay, this their ingratitude to the family of their great human benefactor, is mentioned in close connexion with their ingratitude to Jehovah their covenant God, as next in aggravation and heinousness to their guilt of apostacy. — My respected auditors, we have had our Gideon. After procuring us a great victory, and establishing our independence, he assisted in framing for us a system of *liberty with order*. The noble machine being finished, he applied his own shoulders to the task of putting it in motion, in connexion with coadjutors partaking of his spirit. Thus guided in its operations, it progressed to the admiration of the world; and after rescuing these States from disgrace and danger, exalted them in honor and prosperity. A dreadful counterpart to this felicity would, in all probability, have taken place had the reins of the national government at that early period fallen into the hands of aspiring demagogues, men destitute of religious principle, intent upon nothing but the aggrandizement of themselves and their party, tainted with wild and romantic notions of liberty, heedless of the experience of former ages; and hurrying on to the trial of their own new and fanciful theories. That the infancy of our general government escaped the ignorance, violence, and wickedness of such vile attendants, is surely, among the most brilliant proofs of the watchful care of heaven for our preservation.\*

\* During that period, it was assailed by hosts of enemies. In addition to the difficulties and embarrassments incident to every new government, and the factions incessantly springing up in all republics; it was eminently exposed to the most fatal disasters from that before unheard of revolutionary hurricane which, down to this day, continues sweeping away or new modelling all the old governments of Europe. In those times, had not a *Washington* been at helm and others to co-operate with and succeed him, whose wisdom and firmness preserved our neutrality; our free governments, State, as well as National, might ere this day, have

*Washington* steered us through the first breakers ; then giving us his blessing in his FAREWELL ADDRESS, quitted the helm ; but to the end of his life, his general influence continued, and with it, our prosperity, advancing indeed to a height before unexampled. At length, HE, like the Gideon of Israel, died ; and we, everywhere, made the most pompous show of mourning, by solemn dirges, eulogies and funeral processions. But, scarcely had we finished these farcical scenes when we committed the direction of our affairs to the very men who had been *his* most inveterate opponents ; and by their exaltation, politically slew all his children.\* Does it not become a Christian nation seriously to consider whether ingratitude towards those whom Heaven has made eminently their benefactors, and the instruments of their most signal prosperity, may not draw upon them the tokens of the divine displeasure ?

These are the concluding words of Jotham's curse mentioned in the text,—*Let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo ; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.* The accomplishment of this anathema speedily commenced. The new king and his subjects soon became hostile towards each other. *The men of*

gone by and left us under the shackles of a foreign or domestic tyranny. The people of America, following the example and partaking of the fate of their former allies in Europe, after being with them, "tossed on the tempestuous sea of liberty," would most certainly have sought repose at any expense. When rest is absolutely necessary, it must be taken though under the shade of a bramble.

\* Even this did not satisfy their successors in office. They wished to carry the matter still further, and literally to complete their own resemblance to the Shechemites. For years already they had been massacring the reputation of the friends of *Washington*. Unprincipled scribblers had been hired to write libels upon them, and half the newspapers of the country were the vehicles of these libels ;—the sufferers of this abuse, in the mean-while standing, like the band of *Leonidas* at the Straits of Thermopylæ, to save us from the perdition of French influence. It was this very circumstance however, which inflamed the rage of the new rulers, who, on their coming into power, prosecuted those honest and faithful patriots upon charges so utterly unfounded, that the world was astonished at their indiscretion in thus betraying their malignity.

*Shechem*, says the history, *dealt treacherously with Abimelech—and cursed him in the house of their God.* Towards them, he proved a most cruel tyrant. By dear bought experience they learnt what it was to repose under the shadow of a bramble. Their sufferings seem to have been for some time protracted that they might have opportunity to feel all their sharpness; and in the issue, both parties succeeded in destroying each other. After recording the particulars of this destruction,\* the historian concludes, *Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren; And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal.*

In bringing about this retribution, no miracle seems to have been wrought, nor the operation of any partic-

\* Mutual hostilities seem to have been carried on for some time when Abimelech, with his mercenaries, succeeded in storming the city of his mother's relations, putting its inhabitants to the sword, levelling it with the ground, and *sowing it with salt*. By this last ceremony he expressed his hatred of the Shechemites, and his wish that their city might always lie desolate, a perpetual monument of his revenge.—He next attacked the *tower of Shechem*, an appendage to the temple of the *god Berith*, out of which he had some time before received the money to hire the assassins of his brethren. Into this temple and tower the *house of Millo* had fled, that is, the nobles or elders of the city; for this seems to be the meaning of the Hebrew word, *Millo*. This collection of the principal citizens, having had the chief hand in making Abimelech king, now received a just recompense. The temple and tower being set on fire, they and their wives, to the number of a thousand persons, perished in the flames. *Thus fire came out of the bramble, and devoured the cedars of Lebanon.*—Not far distant from Shechem, stood the city of Thebez whose inhabitants had so far sided with the Shechemites as drew upon them the wrath of the tyrant. On his approach, not attempting to defend the walls of the city, they retreated into its tower. Abimelech thought to have set this on fire, as he had before done that of Shechem; but on his coming nigh for that purpose, he met his fate. He had slain all his brethren upon *one stone*; and now a stone, thrown by the hand of a woman fractured his skull. He felt the blow to be mortal and that he was actually dying. Thus summoned into the presence of his final judge, what has such a monster of wickedness to expect! If everlasting punishment awaits guilt of any kind; what must be the doom of the man who has cruelly in cold blood murdered his brethren and by fire and sword destroyed whole cities of his fellow creatures! Yet Abimelech has no hands in his death; and the only thought which gives him any uneasiness is, lest it should be said of him, *a woman slew him*. Good God! to what a degree of stupidity and brutish insensibility may the moral faculties of thy rational offspring be reduced!

ular cause or agent raised above the pitch or tendency of its nature : The great Ruler of the world suffered the current of events and the succession of causes and effects to proceed on in their accustomed course while this course was so guided by his all-pervading providence that they who had enlisted themselves as the creatures and partizans of an intriguing ambitious usurper, were imperceptibly taken in their own snares and became the victims of their own devices. Let those hear and fear who, in their prejudices and partialities, bear any resemblance to the Shechemites. The same Providence which governed the world in the age of Gideon, governs it still, and has the same means for making the transgressions of the wicked to reprove them, and their backslidings to correct them.

Legislators of the commonwealth, as the representatives of the people, chosen and deputed to make their laws, guard their liberties and take care of their concerns ; it is natural to suppose that men thus selected and for such purposes, rank among the wisest and most upright of the community. We have seen however, that a free people, on some occasions, confide these trusts to hands unworthy of them. They are in special danger of committing this folly at a time when the spirit of party is prevalent. Under the influence of this spirit, the electors consider, not the talents and virtues of good rulers ; but whether the candidate be the *bone and flesh* of their party—having capacity and zeal to serve its interests. Their inquiry is, whether he be a brother of the faction to which themselves are attached. Thus circumstanced, the most violent partisan often obtains the vote. Could we suppose a legislative assembly, composed of such characters, thus chosen and coming together with such views and dispositions ; what would they be but a copse of *brambles*, *the best of them a brier, the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge* ?

God forbid that a majority of rulers in any New England State, should ever consist of such characters ! Indeed they cannot, while any portion of the spirit and

principles of the first settlers of the country, be retained among their descendants. Christian piety, a thing without partiality and without hypocrisy, in its very nature most opposite to the spirit of party, was considered by our forefathers as the only root from which any true and genuine patriotism could spring. This sentiment has been so far handed down to modern times, that it is explicitly recognised in the constitution of this commonwealth. Each member of our legislature, on his entrance into office, solemnly declares that "he believes the Christian religion and has a firm persuasion of its truth." This declaration, virtually acknowledging all the obligations of Christianity, adds them to the other obligations by which our rulers are bound to legislate upon such subjects only and for such purposes only, as are specified in the social compact. Within this inclosure, ye legislators, all your labours are confined. If ye pass these limits, your laws become unlawful; in making them ye betray your trust, violate your oaths, and bring upon yourselves the guilt of perjury.

Should our federal rulers thus abuse the trust reposed in them, and violate the principles of the national compact, you will, as the guardians of the rights of your constituents, make a prudent, yet firm opposition, resolutely treading on in the steps of your predecessors of the last year. The wisdom and dignity of their proceedings upon this subject, have ranked them with those immortal patriots who began that resistance to usurped power, which issued in the independence of these States. If we would preserve the liberties, by that struggle, so dearly purchased, the call for resistance against the usurpations of our own government, is as urgent as it was formerly against those of our mother country. No unbiassed mind can review the measures pursued by those who, for some time past, guided our national counsels, without being convinced, not only that the constitution has been violated, but violated for a purpose the most pernicious; that a state of hostility against Great-Britain,

now nobly contending for the rights of nations ; and a consequent alliance with her adversary, the execrable scourge of Europe, were most treacherously and wickedly contemplated. To my apprehension, the danger from such a policy, is more to be dreaded than any which had ever before threatened our country. It is a gulf in which our national honor and prosperity, our liberties, our religion, our morals, our happiness, will all be lost irretrievably—in which we shall be plunged in everlasting infamy and wretchedness.

But, apart from this danger, which, blessed be God, seems at present to be happily escaped, most probably in consequence of the patriotic opposition just mentioned : to what purpose did we frame the national compact if we suffer its provisions to be disregarded ? Why did we, with such extreme caution, after long deliberation, first in an assembly of delegates from all the states, then in separate conventions in each individual state, prescribe the terms of national union, after each of those terms had been sifted and scrutinized over and over again, in every form and shape, through all their possible consequences and effects—why this vast apparatus, these extended discussions, these unwearied pains in settling the terms of national union, if, when settled, we permit them to be dispensed with at pleasure, place our confidence in the men who wantonly spurn their limitations, and reproach, as hostile to the federal union, that warning voice which would dissuade us from such insanity ? The truth is, that the worst and the only enemies of this union, are those who break its ties and burst its bonds asunder. Its only real and substantial friends, are those who perseveringly oppose such infractions. By such opposition only, can the very end for which the constitution was framed be answered, and the constitution itself, together with the liberties which it guaranties, be preserved.

This constitution has indeed been altered, in some instances, for the worse. It is hoped that its next alteration will be for the better, by clearing it of that strange absurdity, which, through the slaves of our southern brethren, gives them an undue and baneful

influence in our national counsels. These northern states must be lost to a sense of their own rights and dignity—They must acknowledge themselves to be something less than men, if all their parties do not unite in their endeavours to effect this alteration. It is also equally incumbent upon them, to unite in procuring a navy for the protection of their commerce. Had the many millions, foolishly squandered in the delusive purchase of a wilderness utterly useless, been expended in building ships of war; our trade, in all probability, would have escaped its late, as well as present, embarrassments.

Every man, in the least acquainted with history, must know that, of all other means, commerce is pre-eminently useful and indeed necessary for promoting national wealth and prosperity, spreading general information, advancing arts and knowledge, increasing civilization, refining and polishing the manners of a people, and giving them those improvements which adorn society and constitute its highest felicity. But nothing can be more absurd, than to dream of a great and extended commerce without a navy for its protection—this being equally necessary both at home and abroad—in our own harbours and while traversing the ocean—The Gun-boat policy, excepting for embargo purposes, is so despicable and puerile that, were *Buffon* still alive, he might bring it as another proof of the “dwarfish nature of every American production.”

These interesting objects will find their place in the deliberations of our civil fathers. Sooner or later they will be obtained if this nation be destined to flourish and become great. If present success should be doubtful, this should not discourage our exertions. If heaven, provoked by our sins, should, in its wrath, give us up to our prejudices and partialities, that, like the Shechemites, we may be vexed and harassed by the tyranny of brambles; still every good ruler and every good citizen should persevere in their endeavours to ward off these calamities. This is the course of true virtue and patriotism. If in this course, like the children of Gideon, our lives should be cut short by the



prevailing faction ;—even the foresight of this should not damp our ardour. We are to remember that there is still a reward for the righteous. We are all placed here for the present, on purpose that it may be seen how we can acquit ourselves through that variety of private and public trials allotted us by Him to whom we are, at last, responsible. Every true patriot has learnt to think and to say with Paul of Tarsus, *it is a small thing with me to be judged of man's judgment.* Of what real and intrinsic value is that patriotism which requires to be continually fed with present praises or with present rewards ? The true patriot, after the best part of his life has been spent in a series of important and faithful services to his country, will descend the vale of years, serene and happy from the consciousness of a part well acted and from a hope thence arising of the final rewards of virtue. If, instead of this, we behold him wavering in his former patriotic opinions, sour and discontented through mere chagrin that the incense of adulation and the glittering tinsels of office have ceased to nourish his vanity ;—while we lament such weakness, we can hardly forbear suspecting whether a patriotism which becomes thus shrivelled at its latter end, were not from its beginning, defective in principle. Our country abounds with professed patriots ; but after an abundance of leaves and of blossoms, the genuine fruits of that virtue remain wonderfully scarce. It is earnestly recommended to all who wish to cultivate it, that they attend' carefully to the soil. If it be planted in an *honest and good heart*, like the seed of Evangelical truth, it will certainly be fruitful, yielding thirty, sixty, perhaps, a hundred fold. Nor will its fruitfulness be checked by any present difficulties or discouragements. It is animated by the spirit of that Israelitish commander with whose words I conclude. *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God : And the Lord do that which seemeth him good.*



# APPENDIX.

## A LIST OF THOSE WHO HAVE PREACHED ON THIS ANNIVERSARY.

THE following is added by desire of the Historical Society. Gentlemen of information are requested to fill up the blanks. Those who possess any Election Sermons, particularly for the first century of Massachusetts, will benefit the public and posterity, by depositing them in the library of the Historical Society, where they will be gratefully received, and carefully preserved. Those which are now in this library, are marked with a star.

	<i>By whom.</i>	<i>Of what place.</i>	<i>Text.</i>	<i>Size.</i>
1631	Rev.			
32				
33				
34	John Cotton,	Boston.	[Haggai. ii. 4.†]	
35				
36				
37	Thomas Shepard,	Newtown.		
38				
39				
40				
1641	Nathaniel Ward,	Ipswich.		
42				
43	Ezekiel Rogers,	Rowley,		
44				
45				
46				
47				
48				
49				
50				
1651				
52				
53				
54				
55				
56	Charles Chauncy,†	Cambridge.		
57				

† *What is included in brackets, has been added on probability, or without positive authority.*

† *President of Harvard College.*

<i>By whom.</i>	<i>Of what place.</i>	<i>Text.</i>	<i>Size.</i>
1658 Rev.			
59			
60		Psalm lxxvii. 20.	
1661 *John Norton,	Boston.	Jeremiah xxx. 17.	4to.
62			
63 *John Higginson,	Salem.	1 Kings viii. 57, 58, 59.	do.
64			
65			
66		2 Chronicles xv. 2.	
67 *Jonathan Mitchel,	Cambridge.	Nehemiah ii. 10.	do.
68 *Wm. Stoughton, §	Dorchester.	Isaiah lxiii. 8.	do.
69 John Davenport,	Boston.	2 Samuel xxiii. 3.	
70 Samuel Danforth,	Roxbury.		
1671 *John Oxenbridge,	Boston.	Hosea, viii. 4.	12mo.
72 *Thomas Shepard,	Charlestown.	Jeremiah ii. 31.	4to.
73 *Urian Oakes, †	Cambridge.	Deut. xxxii. 2.	do.
74 *Samuel Torrey,	Weymouth.	Revelation ii. 5.	do.
75			
76 *William Hubbard,	Ipswich.	1 Chronicles, xii. 32.	do.
77 Increase Mather,	Boston.	1 Chronicles, xxviii. 9.	do.
78		1 Timothy, ii. 1, 2.	
79 *James Allen,	Boston.	1 Kings, viii. 57.	do.
80			
1681 William Brimsmead,	Marlborough.	Jeremiah, vi. 8.	
82 Samuel Willard,	Boston.	Jeremiah, xxvi. 12, 13.	
83 *Samuel Torrey,	Weymouth.	Deut. xxxii. 47.	4to.
84 [John] Hale,	[Beverly.]	Haggai, ii. 4.	do.
85 *William Adams,	[Dedham.]	Isaiah, lxvi. 2.	do.
86 Michael Wigglesworth	Malden.	Revelations, ii. 4.	do.
87			
88			
89 *Cotton Mather, †	Boston.	2 Chron. xv. 2.	12mo.
90 *Cotton Mather,	Boston.	Nehemiah, v. 19.	do.
1691			
92 [Joshua] Moody,	[Boston.]		
93 *Increase Mather,	Boston.	Isaiah, i. 26.	4to.
94 *Samuel Willard,	Boston.	2 Samuel, xxiii. 3.	12mo.
95 *Samuel Torrey,	Weymouth.	Hosea, i. 7.	do.
96 Cotton Mather,	Boston.		
97 [John] Danforth,	[Dorchester.]		
98 *Nicholas Noyes,	Salem.	Jeremiah, xxxi. 22.	do.
99			
1700 *Cotton Mather,	Boston.	Psalm, cxlvii. 2.	do.
1 Joseph Belcher,	Dedham.	Job, xxix. 25.	do.
2 Increase Mather,	Boston.	Esther, x. iii.	do.
3 Solomon Stoddard,	Northampton.		
4 *Jonathan Russell,	Barstable.	Nehemiah, ix. 33.	4to.
5 *Jos. Estabrooks, A.M.	Concord.	Genesis, xii. 2.	do.
6 John Rogers, A.M.	Ipswich.	1 Kings, viii. 57, 58.	12mo.
7 Samuel Belcher,	Newbury.	Matthew, vi. 10.	do.
8 John Norton,	Hingham.	Numbers, xiv. 11.	do.
9 Grindal Rawsou, A.M.	Mendon.	Jeremiah, xiii. 16.	do.
10 *Eben. Pemberton,	Boston.	Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7.	do.

§ *Afterward* Lieutenant-Governour. † *President of Harvard College.*

‡ *To Convention, after Andros was deposed.*



